

*Australian scientists have found that shark blood could contain a weapon in the fight against cancer. Sharks have immune systems similar to humans and researchers believe that their biological and chemical defences could help slow the spread of certain diseases. Phil Mercer reports::*

Sharks have unusual **antibodies** which are exceptionally **resilient**, as you'd expect from **predators** with such a **fearsome reputation**. Scientists have found that these **disease-busting substances** can withstand high temperatures as well as extremely acidic or alkaline conditions. What's of particular interest to Australian researchers is the antibodies' ability to survive in the harsh environment of the human **gut**, which is crucial to the development of a cancer-fighting pill.

Sharks were chosen for the project because they have **robust** immune systems and rarely **succumb** to infections. There is evidence that their antibodies can slow the spread of breast cancer.

The aim is to eventually establish a **clinical trial** as efforts continue to develop this unconventional new technology that could also help in the treatment of malaria and **rheumatoid arthritis**.

Phil Mercer, BBC, Sydney

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>antibodies</b>	substances which are a part of blood and which help to protect against diseases
<b>resilient</b>	strong and difficult to destroy
<b>predators</b>	animals which hunt and kill other animals for food
<b>a fearsome reputation</b>	are regarded to be very scary
<b>disease-busting</b>	destroying diseases
<b>gut</b>	stomach and digestive system
<b>robust immune systems</b>	strong natural biological protection from diseases
<b>rarely succumb to infections</b>	don't get ill very much
<b>a clinical trial</b>	a scientific test of a medicine or treatment using human subjects
<b>rheumatoid arthritis</b>	medical condition which causes pain and swelling in the joints

**Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:**

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/10/081013\\_shark\\_cancer.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/10/081013_shark_cancer.shtml)